

Rwanda

Welcome to Le Pays des Mille Collines (Land of a Thousand Hills). Rwanda is a lush country of endless mountains and stunning scenery, and nowhere are the mountains more majestic than the peaks of the Virunga volcanoes in the far northwest of the country. The volcanoes form a natural frontier with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda, and hidden among the bamboo and dense jungle of their forbidding slopes are some of the world's last remaining mountain gorillas. It is the opportunity to encounter these contemplative creatures at close quarters that continues to draw visitors to Rwanda.

There's more to Rwanda than magical mountain gorillas, however. The shores of Lake Kivu conceal some of the best inland beaches on the continent. Deep in the southwest, Parc National Nyungwe Forest is the most extensive montane rainforest in the region, and home to many primates. But it's not all monkey business – Kigali is safe and sophisticated.

Rwanda is all too often associated with the horrific events that unfolded in 1994. It has been etched into the world's consciousness as one of the most savage genocides in history. What happened is beyond belief, but the country has taken giant strides towards recovery.

Many visitors are unsure about travelling to Rwanda given its history. However, as long as security and stability persist, Rwanda is a refreshing country in which to travel, where tourists remain a relative novelty and the rewards of the present outweigh the risks of the past.

FAST FACTS

- **Area** 26,338 sq km
- **ATMs** None that accept international cards
- **Borders** Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Tanzania, Uganda
- **Budget** US\$25 per day
- **Capital** Kigali
- **Languages** French, English, Kinyarwanda
- **Money** Rwanda franc (RFR); US\$1 = RFR545
- **Population** 8.7 million
- **Seasons** Wet (mid-March to mid-May, mid-October to mid-December); dry (mid-May to mid-October, mid-December to mid-March)
- **Telephone** Country code ☎ 250; international access code ☎ 00
- **Time** GMT/UTC +2
- **Visa** US\$60 for three months from embassy; US\$60 for two-week extendible visas at major land border crossings and Kigali airport



HIGHLIGHTS

- **Parc National des Volcans** (p726) Scale the slopes of the Virunga volcanoes to encounter gorillas in the mist.
- **Kigali Memorial Centre** (p724) Come face-to-face with the horrors of the past at this haunting genocide museum in the capital.
- **Gisenyi** (p728) Check out Rwanda's very own Costa del Kivu at Gisenyi, home to unspoilt beaches and clear waters.
- **Parc National Nyungwe Forest** (p729) Penetrate the lush canopy of this forest, home to chimpanzees and huge troops of colobus monkeys.
- **Kigali by night** (p725) Settle into a garden bar in Kigali, order a large bottle of Primus beer and take in a sunset over Rwanda's other 999 hills.

CLIMATE & WHEN TO GO

The average daytime temperature is around 24°C, except in the higher mountains, which take up a lot of the country, where the range is 10°C to 15°C. Rwanda can be visited at any time of year. The dry season from mid-May to mid-October is easier for tracking mountain gorillas, but the endless hills are barren, a contrast to the verdant greens of the wet season. Peak season for gorilla tracking is July and August; travelling outside this time means it is easier to arrange a permit.

It rains more frequently and heavily in the northeast, where the volcanoes are covered by rainforest. The summit of Karisimbi (4507m), the highest peak in Rwanda, is often covered with sleet or snow.

ITINERARIES

- **One week** Concentrate on the north of the country. Pay your respects at the Kigali Memorial Centre (p724) before heading for the brooding volcanoes that form the border between Rwanda, Uganda and the DR Congo. Track the gorillas at Parc National des Volcans (p726), one of life's ultimate experiences. Head west to Gisenyi (p728), the Costa del Kivu, and kick back on the sands.
- **Two weeks** Kick off from the capital Kigali (p722) and head south to the intellectual heartland of Butare (p728) and its magnificent National Museum. Stop at Parc National Nyungwe Forest (p729) to see the huge troupes of Angolan colobus

HOW MUCH?

- **Tracking mountain gorillas** US\$375
- **Fresh fish at a decent restaurant** US\$5 to US\$10
- **Internet access** US\$1 to US\$2 per hour
- **New Times newspaper** US\$0.50
- **100km bus ride** US\$2

LONELY PLANET INDEX

- **1L petrol** US\$1
- **1L bottled water** US\$0.50
- **Bottle of Primus (720ml)** US\$1.50
- **Souvenir T-shirt** US\$10
- **Beef brochette** US\$0.50

monkeys before continuing to Cyanugu (p729) and up Lake Kivu to Kibuye (p729). Continue the beach fix at Gisenyi (p728) before heading east to Parc National des Volcans (p726) to meet the majestic mountain gorillas.

HISTORY

Early Days

The original Rwandans, the Twa Pygmies, were gradually displaced by bigger groups of migrating Hutu tribespeople from 1000. Later came the Tutsi from the north, arriving from the 16th century onwards. The authority of the Rwandan *mwami* (king) was far greater than that of his opposite number in Burundi, and the system of feudalism that developed here was unsurpassed in Africa outside Ethiopia. Tutsi overlordship was reinforced by ceremonial and religious observance.

European Meddling

The Germans took the country in 1890 and held it until 1916, when their garrisons surrendered to Belgian forces during WWI. During Belgian rule, the power and privileges of the Tutsi increased, as the new masters found it convenient to rule indirectly through the *mwami* and his princes.

However, in 1956, Mwami Rudahigwa called for independence from Belgium and the Belgians began to switch allegiance to the Hutu majority. The Tutsi favoured fast-track independence, while the Hutus wanted the introduction of democracy first. Following the

death of the *mwami* in 1959, armed clashes began between the two tribes, marking the start of an ethnic conflict that was to culminate in the 1994 genocide. Tutsi fled the country in numbers, resettling in neighbouring Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.

Following independence in 1962, the Hutu majority came to power under Prime Minister Gregoire Kayibanda. The new government introduced quotas for Tutsis, limiting opportunities for education and work, and small groups of Tutsi exiles began to launch guerrilla raids from neighbouring Uganda. In the round of bloodshed that followed, thousands more Tutsis were killed and tens of thousands fled to neighbouring countries.

A Simmering Conflict

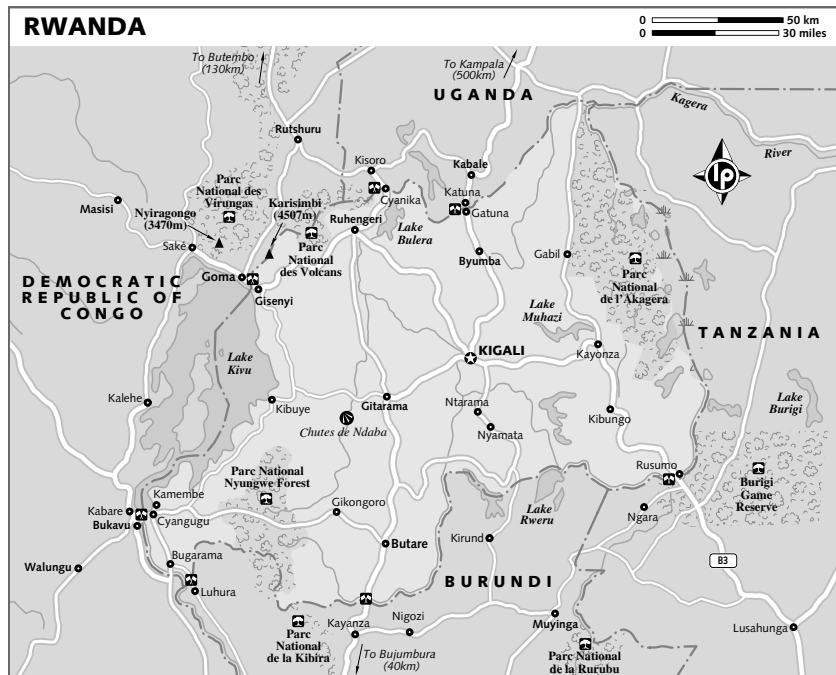
The massacre of Hutus in Burundi in 1972 reignited the old hatreds in Rwanda and prompted the army commander, Major General Juvenal Habyarimana, to oust Kayibanda in 1973. Habyarimana made some progress towards healing the ethnic divisions during the early years of his regime, but before long it was business as usual.

In October 1990, the entire intertribal issue was savagely reopened when 5000 well-armed rebels of the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF), a Tutsi military front, invaded Rwanda from their bases in western Uganda. Two days later, at Habyarimana's request, France, Belgium and Zaïre (as the DRC was then known) flew in troops to assist the Rwandan army to repulse the rebels.

The RPF invaded again in 1991, this time better armed and prepared. By early 1992 the RPF was within 25km of Kigali. A cease-fire was cobbled together and the warring parties brought to the negotiating table. A peace accord between the government and the RPF was finally signed in August 1993.

The Genocide

In 1994, the conflict erupted again on an incomprehensible scale. An estimated 800,000 Rwandans were killed in just three months, mostly by Interahamwe militias – gangs of youths armed with machetes, guns and other weapons supplied by officials close to Habyarimana. Three million people fled the country to refugee camps in Tanzania, the



DRC and Uganda, and an estimated seven million of the country's nine million people were displaced.

The spark for the carnage was the death of Habyarimana and his Burundian counterpart, Cyprien Ntaryamira, on 6 April as their plane was shot down attempting to land in Kigali on their return from peace talks in Tanzania. It will probably never be known who fired the missile, but most observers believe it was Hutu extremists. Whoever was responsible, the event unleashed one of the 20th century's worst explosions of blood-letting. The massacres that followed were no spontaneous outburst of violence but a calculated 'final solution' by extremist elements of Habyarimana's government to rid the country of all Tutsi and the Hutu reformists. Rwandan army and Interahamwe death squads ranged at will over the countryside killing, looting and burning, and roadblocks were set up in every town and city.

The UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was in Rwanda throughout the genocide, but was powerless to prevent the killing due to an ineffective mandate. The international community left Rwanda to face its fate. By the time UNAMIR was finally reinforced in July, it was too late. The genocide was already over and the RPF had taken power in Kigali.

The Aftermath

Hutu extremists and their allies fled into eastern DRC to regroup and launched cross-border raids into both Rwanda and Burundi from the refugee camps in the Goma and Uvira regions. Rwanda responded with raids into eastern DRC and support for Tutsi rebels north of Goma.

The Hutu fought alongside the Congolese army, and the entire situation turned ugly, as one million or so refugees were caught in the middle. But the RPF and their allies soon

swept across the DRC, installing Laurent Kabila in power and breaking the grip of the extremists on the camps. However, they soon decided Kabila was not such a reliable ally and became embroiled in Africa's biggest war to date, fighting over the DRC's mineral wealth with nine other African states.

The **International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda** (www.ict.org) was established in Arusha (Tanzania) in November 1994 to bring to justice former government and military officials for acts of genocide. Several big fish have been sentenced in the past decade, but in Rwanda the prisons are still overflowing with smaller fish. Most important was Prime Minister Jean Kambanda, who filed a guilty plea and provided the trial with much inside information on other architects of the genocide. His was the first-ever conviction of a head of state for the crime of genocide.

Rwanda Today

Rwanda has done a remarkable job of getting back on its feet. It has achieved an impressive degree of stability and security in a remarkably short time, albeit with considerable help from a guilty international community that ignored the country in its darkest hour. Rwanda has done an excellent job of exporting its problem to the DRC in the past decade, but as long as rebels remain at large in the DRC, Rwanda has cause for concern. The only way peace and prosperity will finally come to Rwanda is with a solution to the wider regional problems and stability in its giant neighbour.

The RPF government has made an impressive effort to promote reconciliation and restore trust between the two communities. This is no small achievement after the horrors that were inflicted on the Tutsi during the genocide of 1994. It would have been easy for the RPF to embark on a campaign of revenge and reprisal, but instead the government is attempting to build a society with a place for everyone, regardless of tribe. There are no more Tutsis, no more Hutus, only Rwandans. Idealistic perhaps, but it is also the only hope for the future.

CULTURE

Tribal conflict has torn Rwanda apart during much of the independence period, culminating in the horrific genocide that unfolded in 1994. There are two schools of thought when it comes to looking at Rwandan identity.

THINK BEFORE YOU ASK

Many Rwandans experienced hell on earth in the genocide of 1994 and its aftermath. Don't reopen old wounds by bringing up the genocide with virtual strangers, particularly away from the cities. If you meet Rwandans who want to discuss it, as many do in Kigali, then that is another story.

The colonial approach employed by the Belgians was to divide and conquer, issuing ID cards that divvied up the population along strict ethnic lines. They tapped up the Tutsis as leaders to help control the Hutu majority. Later, as independence approached, they switched sides, pitting Hutu against Tutsi in a new conflict, which crackled away until the 1990s when it exploded onto the world stage.

In the new Rwanda, the opposite is true. Ethnic identities are out, everyone is Rwandan. The government is at pains to present a Rwandan identity and blames the Belgians for categorising the country along tribal lines that set the stage for the savagery that followed. Rwanda was a peaceful place before: Hutu and Tutsi lived side by side for generations and intermarriage was common, or so the story goes.

The truth, as always, is probably somewhere in between. President Paul Kagame is trying to put the past behind and create a new Rwanda. It will take time, maybe a generation or more, but what has been achieved in just over a decade is astonishing. However, to avoid the divisions of the past once again surfacing in the new Rwanda, democratic development is required that favours all – urban and rural, rich and poor – and is blind to tribe.

Urban Rwanda is a sophisticated place and people follow a Mediterranean pattern of starting early before breaking for a siesta. The rhythm of rural life is very different and follows the sun. People work long hours from dawn until dusk, but also take a break during the hottest part of the day.

Rwanda's economy was decimated during the genocide, as production ground to a halt and foreign investment was scared away. However, the current government has done an impressive job of turning things around and the economy is growing fast.

PEOPLE

Tiny as it is, Rwanda is one of the most densely populated countries in Africa, with more than 300 people per square kilometre. The majority of Rwandans – at more than 80% of the population – are Hutu. Tutsis make up more than 15% of the population and fewer than 1% of the population are Twa Pygmy. Most Rwandans speak at least some French, but increasing numbers of returning exiles speak English.

Faith is an important rock in the lives of many Rwandans, and Christianity remains the predominant religion. The church in Rwanda was tainted by its association with the genocide in 1994, but that doesn't seem to have dampened the devotion to the word of God.

ARTS & CRAFTS

Rwanda's most famous dancers are the Intore troupe. Their warrior-like displays are accompanied by a trancelike drumbeat similar to that of the famous Les Tambourinaires in Burundi.

Hotel Rwanda has put Rwanda back on the map for moviegoers. Although it was shot in South Africa, it tells the story of Hotel des Milles Collines manager Paul Rusesabagina, played by Don Cheadle, turning his luxury hotel into a temporary haven for thousands fleeing the erupting genocide.

Gorillas in the Mist, starring Sigourney Weaver, is based on the autobiography of Dian Fossey and her work with the rare mountain gorillas in Parc National des Volcans. It's essential viewing for anyone tracking the gorillas.

ENVIRONMENT

Rwanda is not known as 'the land of a thousand hills' for nothing. The hills stretch into the infinite horizon in every direction, making bus travel akin to a dose of the bends. To the west is the stunning shoreline of Lake Kivu, with its hidden bays, plunging cliffs and secret beaches. In the east, the hills finally trail off towards Tanzania and the land turns to the grassy plains and acacia of Parc National de l'Akagera.

Like Uganda, Rwanda is primate-tastic. Wildlife in Rwanda for most visitors comes down to the mountain gorillas, the residents of Parc National des Volcans in the northwest, but there are also masses of monkeys in Parc National Nyungwe Forest and chimp tracking is possible.

Due to its tiny size, Rwanda only has a small network of national parks. The most popular protected area is Parc National des Volcans, a string of brooding volcanoes that provides a home for the rare mountain gorillas. Nyungwe Forest, a tropical montane forest that is one of the richest primate destinations in the region, is the newest national park. Parc National de l'Akagera is home to large mammals such as elephants and hippos.

Population density has had a detrimental effect on the country's national park system, reducing Parc National des Volcans by half in 1969 and Parc National de l'Akagera by two-thirds in 1998.

FOOD & DRINK

African fare in Rwanda is the same as in the rest of the region, but a wide variety of excellent Continental cuisine is available in urban areas. Local beers include the near-legendary Primus, in almighty 720ml bottles, and Mulzig, both of which are available all over the country.

KIGALI

pop 600,000

Rwanda was once the 'Land of Eternal Spring' and its capital Kigali still fits the bill. Sprawled over ridges, hills and valleys, it is a small, attractive city offering superb views over the intensively cultivated and terraced countryside beyond. It was quite badly trashed during the civil war in 1994, but following a long rehabilitation, one gets the sense that Kigali is a city looking ahead to the future, not back to the past.

There aren't many sights in the city, but the Kigali Memorial Centre, documenting the Rwandan genocide, is a must for all visitors to Rwanda. The city has a reasonable range of hotels and restaurants, and while nightlife is not quite as pumping as it is in Kampala (Uganda) or Nairobi (Kenya), it is worth a whiff at the weekend.

ORIENTATION

The commercial centre of Kigali is located on a hill to the southwest of Pl de l'Unité Nationale and is focused on Ave du Commerce and the network of streets that bisect it. To the south there are several *grandes artères* (major roads) leading into the diplomatic quarter where embassies and expensive restaurants are located. Quite a lot of night-time action can be found east of the centre in the suburb of Kacyiru.

INFORMATION

For the latest information on Kigali, pick up a copy of *The Eye: Rwanda*, a free listings guide to the capital available in restaurants, bars, hotels etc.

Bookshops

Kigali's bookshops stock mostly French-language publications.

Librairie Ikirezi (☎ 571314; Ave de la Paix; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-12.30pm Sat & Sun) A wide range of English and French books on Rwanda and the world beyond.

Emergency

Police (☎ 083 11170) A 24-hour emergency number.

Internet Access

Internet access is widespread and very cheap in Kigali.

Iposita Cybercafé (per hr RFr400) Part of the post office complex.

Okapi Hotel (Blvd de Nyabugogo; per hr RFr500) There is a 24-hour internet café in the lobby.

Medical Services

Kigali Hospital (☎ 571786; Ave de la Paix) State hospital.

Netcare King Faycal Hospital (☎ 582421) Sophisticated medical treatment in suburban Kacyiru, 5km northeast of the city centre.

Money

There are several banks around the city centre, but the best places to change money are the handful of bureaux de change near the main post office. There are ATMs, but they are not yet wired to an international network.

Banque de Kigali (Ave du Commerce) When it comes to travellers cheques or credit-card cash advances, this is the only option. Hefty commissions of US\$15 and up!

Post

Main post office (Ave de la Paix; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) Poste restante services available.

Telephone

For international calls, there are plenty of kiosks opposite the post office. There are also public phone booths throughout the city.

Tourist Information

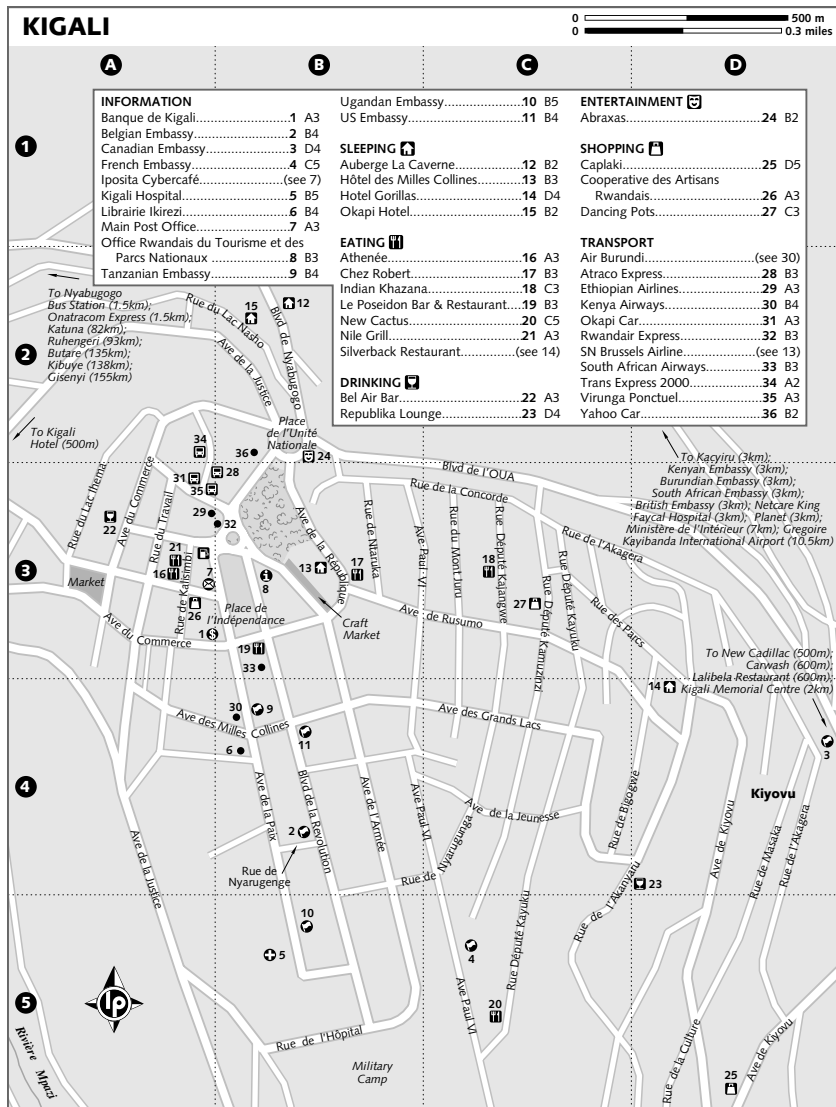
Office Rwandais du Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux (ORTPN; ☎ 576514; www.rwandatourism.com; BP 905, 1 Blvd de la Revolution; ☎ 7am-5pm Mon-Fri, 8am-2pm Sat & Sun) Staff here speak French and English and are pretty helpful in assisting with enquiries. This is the place for independent travellers to make reservations to track the mountain gorillas in Parc National des Volcans (see p276 for more details).

The choice of budget accommodation is pretty poor, making this a good city to upgrade to something smarter.

Kigali Hotel (☎ /fax 571384; s/d Rf5000/7000) Hidden behind the mosque on the road to Nyamirambo, this is good value. It has large, clean rooms equipped with TV and bathroom.

Great, if you can live with the early-morning call to prayer.

Auberge La Caverne (☎ 574549; Blvd de Nyabugogo; rRf\$5000-15,000) A cut above the competition at the cheaper end, this little auberge is tucked away beneath the main road. The cheapest rooms are pretty small, but the more francs you spend the more they begin to expand.



THE GENOCIDE REMEMBERED...

The **Kigali Memorial Centre** (www.kigalimemorialcentre.org; admission free, donations appreciated; ☎ 10am-5pm) is a must for all visitors in Rwanda wanting to learn more about how it was that the world watched as a genocide unfolded in this tiny landlocked country.

Downstairs is dedicated to the Rwandan genocide. The sections on the cold and calculated planning of the genocide and its bloody execution are particularly disturbing and include moving video testimony from survivors. Finally you are confronted with a room full of photographs of Rwandan victims of the genocide. You feel yourself suffocating under the weight of sadness and despair, the wasted lives and loves of the nameless people surrounding you. Apollon Katahizi's words are particularly resonant as killings continue across the world today: "When they said 'never again' after the holocaust, was it meant for some people and not for others?"

Upstairs is a moving section dedicated to informing visitors about other genocides that have taken place around the world to set Rwanda's nightmare in its historical context. 'Wasted Lives' is a section on Rwandan children who fell victim to the killers' machetes. Why? Why? Why? The Kigali Memorial Centre explains it as best it can, but no-one can answer the fundamental question of what it takes to turn man into beast.

Buried in the memorial gardens here are the remains of 250,000 victims of the genocide, gathered here as a final resting place.

Set up with assistance from the **Aegis Trust** (www.aegistrust.org), the Kigali Memorial Centre is located in the Kisozi district of town. Arrange a taxi (RFR2000) or a *taxi-motor* (RFR1000) for the 3km journey from the city centre.

Okapi Hotel (☎ 576765; www.okapi.co.rw; Blvd de Nyabugogo; s/d incl breakfast US\$40/50; ☎) This centrally located business hotel offers smart rooms with satellite TV, a hot-water bathtub and a balcony. There are also a few cheapies with hot showers at US\$20. There's a fantastic restaurant here with dishes from around the world.

Hotel Gorillas (☎ 501717; www.hotelgorillas.com; Rue des Parcs; s/d US\$50/70, large s/d with bathtub US\$60/80) A slick little hotel in the upmarket Kiyovu area of the city, this place is winning over a lot of customers thanks to its spacious rooms with a touch of decorative flair. One of the best deals in town, it is also home to the outstanding Silverback Restaurant.

Hotel des Milles Collines (☎ 576530; www.millescollines.net; Ave de la République; r US\$88/103; ☎) Welcome to the Hotel Rwanda! The hotel used in the movie was actually in South Africa, but the original hotel where horror and hope collided was right here, the Milles Collines. Rooms are a four-star standard, and the pool-side bar is very popular at weekends.

EATING

Nile Grill (Rue de Kalisimbi; vegetarian/meat buffet RFR1500/2000; ☎ 7.30am-8pm) There are several local joints in the city centre doing a roaring trade in lunchtime buffets and cheap eats – Nile is one of the best known.

Le Poseidon Bar & Restaurant (Blvd de la République; mains RFR1500-3000) This lively bar and local restaurant offering sandwiches, burgers, pizzas and pastas is Kigali's answer to fast food. Le Poseidon draws a healthy work crowd around lunchtime.

New Cactus (☎ 572572; Rue Député Kayuku; mains RFR2000-5000) Set on a commanding ridge up in Kiyovu, this restaurant has the ultimate views of Kigali by night. Outrageously popular, it's always buzzing thanks to a good menu of French favourites and authentic pizzas and a generous wine list. Plan to spend liberally and live well.

Chez Robert (☎ 501305; Ave de la République; meals RFR2000-5000) The menu here is great value for money for those that want a sophisticated meal without the sophisticated bill. The steaks are particularly good and the blue-cheese sauce the perfect complement.

Lalibela Restaurant (☎ 575412; Ave des Poids Lourds; mains RFR3000) Set in the grounds of the One Love Club, this is Kigali's only Ethiopian restaurant. It has a laid-back atmosphere in keeping with the Rasta owner and serves big portions of spicy chicken.

Silverback Restaurant (☎ 501717; Rue des Parcs; mains RFR4000-10,000) One of the best restaurants in Kigali, the accent here is most definitely French. Foie gras, duck à l'orange and even rabbit are available for the discerning diner.

The wine list is impressive, but so are the prices at around US\$40 a bottle.

Indian Khazana (Rue Député Kajangwe; full meal RFr7500) Kampala's most celebrated Indian restaurant comes south to Kigali. Khana Khazana has been spicing up people's lives for years in the Ugandan capital and now Rwanda can enjoy the subtle flavours of the subcontinent. At the time of research it was one of the hottest places in town.

Travellers looking to self-cater or planning some time in Nyungwe Forest will find a wide selection of imports at **Athenée** (Rue de Kalisimbi), just west of the main post office.

DRINKING

The night scene in Kigali constantly evolves, with places going in and out of fashion like Beckham's haircuts. Ask around to see what's hot and what's not.

Republika Lounge (Rue de l'Akanyaru) Republika, in the Kiyovu area, is definitely *the* place to be in Kigali. There are huge views from the large terrace, and lush furnishings, a well-stocked bar and a small menu pull the punters.

Carwash (Ave des Poids Lourds) This place is quite literally a carwash, but don't worry, we are not going mad. It also has a brilliant garden bar. It's cheaper to drink here than in the New Cadillac nightclub, so drop by on your way out.

Bel Air Bar (Ave de Commerce) A popular local haunt with great views over the centre of town. Beers are cheap, but watch the stairs carefully on the way home after a few Primuses, as they are seriously steep!

ENTERTAINMENT

Abraxas (Ave de la République; admission RFr2000) At weekends, the Centre D'Echanges Culturels Franco-Rwandais plays host to leading local bands. The music is an eclectic mix of Rwandan, reggae and international covers, and after a few beers everyone finds their feet.

New Cadillac (admission RFr2000; ☎ Wed-Sun) This long-running club is still just about holding off all-comers to remain the most popular place in town. It doesn't pick up until after midnight, but once it does, it really does rock.

Planet (Kigali Business Centre, Ave du Lac Muhazi; admission RFr3000) This trendy nightclub is often called KBC by locals because of its location. The most popular place in town with the beautiful pool, it really goes off at weekends.

SHOPPING

Kigali isn't exactly the shopping capital of Africa. The old street market has been moved to a new home funded by the French called **Caplaki** (Ave de Kiyovu). Sellers are now organised in fixed stalls and popular items include carvings and masks from the DRC.

There are some good craft shops selling locally produced carvings, cards and paintings. **Cooperative des Artisans Rwandais** (Rue de Kalisimbi) is one of the best. Prices are generally fixed, but small discounts may be offered.

Dancing Pots (Rue Député Kamuzinzi) A fair-trade project established to assist the Batwa pygmies; it's possible to buy terracotta pieces here.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Gregoire Kayibanda International Airport is located at Kanombe, 10km east of Kigali centre. For contact details of the international airlines serving Rwanda, see p732.

Bus

Several bus companies operate services to major towns; they are generally less crowded and safer than local minibuses. Okapi Car runs to Butare, Gisenyi, Kibuye and Ruhengeri; Atraco Express to Butare, Ruhengeri and Gisenyi, including a through service to Goma; Trans Express 2000 to Butare; and Virunga Ponctuel to Ruhengeri. See the individual town entries for more details on journey times and road conditions. All buses depart from company bus offices in the city centre. Onatracom Express have larger 45-seat buses and these serve Ruhengeri and Gisenyi (three daily), plus Butare and Cyangugu (two daily). These services depart from the Nyabugogo bus station.

Local minibuses depart from the Nyabugogo bus station for towns all over Rwanda, including Butare (RFr1200, two hours), Katuna (RFr1500, 1½ hours), Kibuye (RFr1300, two hours), Ruhengeri (RFr1100, two hours) and Gisenyi (RFr1600, four hours). These minibuses leave when full throughout the day. See the respective town entries for further details.

Nyabugogo bus station is in the valley about 2km north of the city centre and minibuses (RFr200) cruise the central streets looking for passengers. There is no longer a local bus station in the centre.

GETTING AROUND

A taxi from the airport to the town centre costs about RFr5000 (US\$10). A taxi within the city centre starts at RFr1000 or so, more to Kacyiru or at night. A *taxi-motor* (motorbike taxi) is cheaper, but can involve scary speeds at night.

AROUND KIGALI

NYAMATA & NTARAMA GENOCIDE MEMORIALS

During the genocide, many horrific massacres around the country took place in churches to which victims had fled in the hope of refuge. Nyatama, about 30km south of Kigali, is a deeply disturbing memorial where skulls and bones of the many victims are on display. The church at Ntarama is more understated but no less powerful. The church has not been touched since the bodies were removed more than a decade ago. This church is about 25km from Kigali and both memorials can be visited in one day trip. To rent a vehicle in Kigali talk to hotels or travel agents. The more adventurous could take a *taxi-motor*.

NORTHWESTERN RWANDA

The northwest of Rwanda is where the country really earns its nickname as the Land of a Thousand Hills. It's a beautiful region and the peaks culminate in the stunning Virunga volcanoes, forming a formidable natural border between Rwanda, Uganda and the DRC.

RUHENGARI

Many travellers stay in Ruhengeri when visiting the gorillas in Parc National des Volcans, although smarter accommodation is available near the park itself (see opposite). Ruhengeri is a small, dusty town with magnificent views of the volcanoes to the north and west.

BCDR (Rue Muhabura) represents Western Union if you need money for a gorilla visit fast; there is nowhere to change travellers cheques or arrange credit-card cash advances in town. Several small shops along Ave du 5 Juillet offer internet access. **Office Rwandais du Tourisme et des Parcs Nationaux** (ORTPN; ☎ 546645; Ave du 5 Juillet) is

the park office where it is also possible to arrange a permit to track the gorillas.

Part of the popular Skyblue hotels group in Uganda, **Tourist Rest House** (☎ 546635; Rue Muhabura; s/tw RFr3000/5000) is a well-run little establishment. Rooms are small but there is hot water in the shared showers.

For those wanting a bathroom on tap, so to speak, **Hôtel Urumuri** (☎ 546820; r RFr3500) is the best deal in town. Tucked away on a side street off Rue du Marché, it is a friendly spot and the restaurant (meals RFr1000) serves tasty *brochettes*.

Ruhengeri's leading hotel is **Hôtel Muhabura** (☎ 546296; Ave du 5 Juillet; r/apt RFr15000/20,000), close to the ORTPN office. It has large, airy rooms with bathrooms, and several apartments that are verging on minisuites, but the lack of competition in town has seen prices double in the last few years. The restaurant-bar here is the best in town, with mains from RFr2000.

Okapi Car (Ave du 5 Juillet), **Virunga Express** (Ave du 5 Juillet) and **Atraco Express** (Ave du 5 Juillet) all offer regular minibuses to Kigali for RFr1300 (two hours). **Onatracom Express** (Ave du 5 Juillet) has three large buses per day passing through, connecting Kigali and Gisenyi; tickets are available at the petrol station.

There are normal minibuses from Ruhengeri to Kigali (RFr1100, two hours) on a breathtaking mountain road, as well as to Cyanika (RFr400, 45 minutes) and Gisenyi (RFr800, 1½ hours).

PARC NATIONAL DES VOLCANS

A dramatic chain of seven volcanoes, this park is the definitive place to track the rare and captivating **mountain gorillas**. Forming a natural border with the DRC and Uganda, the area is one of the most beautiful in Africa. Dian Fossey's account of her years with the gorillas and her battle with poachers and government officials, is detailed in *Gorillas in the Mist*, a must-read before coming here. There is no habitat more evocative of the gorillas than the densely forested slopes of the Virunga volcanoes. Coming upon the Susa family of 35 on the slopes of Karisimbi is one of life's unforgettable moments – no bars, no windows, three silverbacks eye the proceedings as infants and juveniles frolic on every side.

The park is the most reliable option for tracking gorillas in the region, as there are

five habituated gorilla families and 40 permits available daily. (Uganda has fewer permits and the DRC has potential security questions.)

Activities

GORILLA TRACKING

Advance reservations should be made through the ORTPN office in Kigali (p722), but it is possible to turn up in Ruhengeri without a booking. If there are no permits available in Kigali, contact a travel agent through ORTPN or continue to Ruhengeri where a standby permit might be available at short notice.

Park visits must be arranged the day before at the ORTPN office in Ruhengeri (opposite). Visitors are restricted to one hour with the gorillas, and only one group of up to eight people is allowed to visit each group of gorillas per day. Permits cost US\$375 per person, including compulsory guides and guards, plus US\$2 for porters and extra for tips. Rangers can generally find the gorillas within one to four hours of starting, but conditions can be tough. Stinging nettles, biting ants and the cool, wet weather make long trousers, sturdy footwear and wet-weather gear essential. For more on tracking rules, see p805.

GOLDEN MONKEY TRACKING

This is a great way to pass some time while waiting for a gorilla permit, as these beautiful monkeys bound about the branches of bigger trees. It costs US\$75 to track the golden monkeys, but only US\$20 across the other side of the Virungas at Mgahinga in Uganda. Factoring in the park fees, that adds up to US\$100 in Rwanda, only US\$40 in Uganda.

TREKKING THE VOLCANOES

The stunning volcanoes are once again open to visitors for guided treks, ranging from sev-

eral hours to two days. A guide is compulsory but porters are optional.

The ascents pass through some remarkable changes of vegetation, ranging from thick forests of bamboo, giant lobelia or hagenia, to alpine meadows. If the weather is favourable, the reward is some spectacular views over the mountain chain. It is possible to trek to the top of Bisoke (3711m; US\$50) in one day or Karisimbi (4507m; US\$150) in two days. It is also possible to visit the grave of Dian Fossey (US\$50), part of the gorilla graveyard where many of her subjects were buried, including the famous Digit.

Sleeping

Kinigi Guesthouse (☎ 546984; www.rwanda-gorillas.com; s/d incl breakfast US\$20/25) The best-value option near the national park, this local lodge is run to assist vulnerable Rwandan women. Set in lush gardens, the wooden bungalows are atmospheric and the staff friendly.

Gorilla's Nest Camp (☎ 546331; gorillanest@yahoo.fr; s/d incl breakfast US\$80/100) Also in the Kinigi area, this lodge has wonderful views up to the volcanoes. Rooms are smart and include hot-water showers.

Virunga Lodge (☎ 502452; www.volcanoessafaris.com; s/d US\$265/400) One of the most stunningly situated camps in the region, the new Volcanoes Safaris-run Virunga Lodge is nestled on a ridge above Lake Bulela and offers incredible views across to the Virunga volcanoes. Accommodation is housed in luxury stone chalets.

Getting There & Away

To get to the park from Ruhengeri, arrange a vehicle through the ORTPN office in Ruhengeri (about US\$50), or try hitching a ride with fellow trackers. Otherwise, charter a *taxi-motor* for about RFr2500 or so.

GORILLAS & GUERRILLAS

Hunting, poaching, disease and human encroachment into the forests have always been a threat to the mountain gorillas of East Africa. For a while during the 1970s and 1980s the gorillas were, to some degree, protected from poaching because of the large influx of tourist dollars that encouraged local people living adjacent to their habitats to protect them.

However, during the civil war in Rwanda in the mid-1990s, and the later war in the DRC, a number of gorillas disappeared as poachers captured them for sale or soldiers lived off the land.

For more information about current threats to the gorillas, check out the websites of the **International Gorilla Conservation Programme** (www.mountaingorillas.org) and the **Dian Fossey Gorilla Fund International** (www.gorillafund.org).

GISENYI

Welcome to the Costa del Kivu! Gisenyi is a ritzy resort town for rich Rwandans and resident foreigners. The views over **Lake Kivu** and **Nyiragongo** (3470m) to the northwest are magnificent, but the volcano blew its top in early 2002, consuming much of neighbouring Goma in the DRC.

Banks in Gisenyi can only exchange cash, not travellers cheques, and do not offer credit-card cash advances. **Modern Internet** (Rue de Ruhengeri) offers the best internet connection in town, sometimes the only connection.

Gisenyi is home to the **Primus Brewery**, about 7km out of town along a lovely lakeshore road. Free tours can be arranged. Swimming and sunbathing on the beaches are free, but ask locals before plunging in – it's very dangerous to swim in certain parts of Lake Kivu because of volcanic gases and bilharzia, and you need to be very careful around Gisenyi.

The leader of the pack among the cheaper guesthouses, **Auberge de Gisenyi** (☎ 540385; Ave de l'Umuganda; s/d RFr5000/6000) has rooms that face onto an attractive courtyard garden. The doubles are almost suites, making them a good deal, and the restaurant is popular at night for both food and beer.

Housed in a rambling old colonial-era house, the **Hôtel Palm Beach** (☎ 085 59551; uwinya@yahoo.fr; Ave de la Coopération; r RFr15,000-30,000) has rooms that are spacious and comfortable. It has its own stretch of private beachfront, a beach bar and a popular restaurant-bar downstairs.

The owners of the **Stipp Hotel** (☎ 540540; www.stippag.co.rw; Ave de la Révolution; s/d US\$60/70; 🍷) have done a number on an old property, creating Gisenyi's, surely Rwanda's, first boutique hotel. The lush grounds include a swimming pool and sauna. The restaurant here is considered one of the best in town.

For something completely different, head to **Texas** (Rue de Ruhengeri; snacks RFr1000-3000), a sophisticated coffee shop in the upper part of town. The menu includes fresh breads, pastries and even pizzas, plus creative coffees and juices.

Boasting a beautiful beachfront location, **Bikini Tam-Tam Bar & Restaurant** (Ave de la Production; mains US\$4) sets up tables on the sand. **Boulangerie de Gisenyi** (Rue des Poissons) is the place for cheese, meats and fresh bread for self-caterers.

Okapi Car (Ave du Marché) and **Atraco Express** (Ave du Marché) operate minibuses between Gisenyi and Kigali (RFr1800, three hours). There are also

regular minibuses to Ruhengeri (RFr700, two hours). **Onatracom Express** (Ave de l'Umuganda) runs big buses to Kigali (RFr1600, four hours) passing through Ruhengeri (RFr800, two hours). All buses terminate on Ave de l'Umuganda.

SOUTHWESTERN RWANDA

The endless mountains don't stop as you head south towards Burundi. Highlights here include the intellectual capital of Butare and the magnificent forest of Parc National Nyungwe Forest, not forgetting of course the beautiful blue waters of Lake Kivu.

BUTARE

The centre of intellectual inspiration in Rwanda, Butare is home to the National University. It's tiny after Kigali, but the large student population brings a certain buzz to the place.

There are branches of BCR, BCDI and Banque de Kigali on the main Rue de Kigali, but they can only deal with cash. **Computer Link @ Butare** (Rue de Kigali; per hr RFr500) is the best place for internet access. **Expo Vente** (Rue de Kigali) is a handicrafts shop exhibiting local products and a great-value place to buy some Rwandan work.

Butare's trump card is the **Musée National du Rwanda** (admission RFr1000; ☎ 9-11.30am & 2.30-4.30pm Tue-Sun, 2.30-4.30pm Mon), which is definitely worth visiting for its ethnological and archaeological displays, all housed in a memorable structure. It is on the road to Kigali, a 15-minute walk north of the town centre.

Set just off Ave du Commerce, **Hôtel des Beaux-Arts** (☎ 530032; Ave du Commerce; r RFr4000-6000) has real character for a cheapie. The hotel is decorated with local products and all rooms include hot-water bathrooms, making for a good deal.

Hôtel Faucon (☎ 086 17657; Rue de Kigali; s/apt RFr5000/10,000) is a tempting offer, as it has huge rooms at rock-bottom prices. Apartments come with a bathroom, satellite TV and a seating area, and breakfast is included.

Probably the best hotel in town is **Hôtel Ibis** (☎ 530335; campionibis@hotmail.com; Rue de Kigali; s/d RFr15,000/18,000, apt RFr20,000-23,000), thanks to its central location and comfortable rooms. There is an excellent terrace bar-restaurant

here that serves great meals and doubles as a bar by night.

Chez Venant (☎ 085 04115; Rue Rwamamba; mains RFr1000-5000) brings the taste of China to Butare – surprising given the name. There are also a few local dishes for good measure.

Atraco Express, Okapi Car, Trans Express 2000 and Volcano Express have hourly services to and from Kigali, departing from offices on Rue de Kigali and costing RFr1300 (two hours). Atraco Express and Onatracom Express have daily departures to Cyangugu (RFr1700).

The minibus station is 1km north of the town centre. Regular minibuses go to Kigali (RFr1100, two hours), and to Kamembe (RFr1600, three hours), near Cyangugu, passing through the stunning Nyungwe Forest.

PARC NATIONAL NYUNGWE FOREST

The spectacular 970-sq-km Nyungwe Forest is one of the largest protected montane rainforests in Africa, easily the equal of Kibale Forest in Uganda. It offers superb scenery and views of the volcanoes of the Parc National des Virunga in the DRC to the north.

The forest is home to huge groups of black-and-white Angola colobus monkeys, several groups of chimpanzees, 50 species of other mammals, 270 species of tree, 275 species of bird, and an astonishing variety of orchids and butterflies.

It costs US\$20 per day to visit Nyungwe Forest, but this includes guided or unguided walks on any of the colour-coded forest trails and camping at Uwinka. **Chimpanzee tracking** (US\$50) starts at 6am, and **colobus walks** (US\$30) leave at 9am and 3pm from park headquarters; talk to rangers. There is no law against spotting primates on an ordinary walk, but there is a better chance of sightings on a primate walk.

There is an overpriced camp site (US\$20) at the Uwinka park headquarters; bring everything you need (including warm clothes), except drinks.

Anyone without a tent can make for the homely **ORTPN Resthouse** (r per person US\$20), but it is 18km west of Uwinka and pretty isolated for those without transport.

Nyungwe Forest is bisected by the road between Butare and Kamembe (near Cyangugu), and is accessible by minibus from either town. You may get charged full fare (RFr1600) in ei-

ther direction, but you may be able to bargain down to RFr1000. It takes two hours from Butare and one hour from Cyangugu. There are regular buses. From Butare, the Uwinka headquarters is just past the 90km post.

CYANGUGU

In a lovely location at the southern end of Lake Kivu, Cyangugu looks across to Bukavu in the DRC. A few kilometres north of Cyangugu is **Kamembe**, the region's trade and transport centre.

Right by the border, **Hôte St François** (☎ 537915; s/d/tr RFr1500/2500/3500) is a friendly place that's spotlessly clean and excellent value for money. Couples might be separated unless obviously married; bring a ring.

Set back on the hill just above the lake, **Hotel des Chutes** (☎ 537405; r RFr8000-10,000) offers fine views. It is worth spending a little extra for satellite TV and a balcony. There is also a great little restaurant here with a range of European cuisine (mains from RFr2000).

Minibuses for the short hop between Cyangugu and Kamembe cost RFr100. Atraco Express and Onatracom Express have four daily departures between them to Butare (RFr1700, three hours). From Kamembe to Butare local minibuses cost RFr1600. There is also a daily bus at 8am from Cyangugu to Kibuye, which traverses an incredible road of plunging cliffs and tight hairpins.

KIBUYE

Kibuye has got the location, spread across several irregular bays on Lake Kivu. It's the only real beach and water sports alternative to Gisenyi, but note that it's very dangerous to swim in certain parts of Lake Kivu because of volcanic gases and bilharzia. Kibuye is usually fine, but be very careful around Gisenyi.

Occupying a peaceful location on a wooded peninsula in the lake, **Bethanie Guesthouse** (☎ 568509; bethanie@epr.org.rw; dm US\$4, s/d from US\$14/18; 📺) has rooms of all shapes and sizes. It has a small restaurant, but is often booked up with conferences.

In the centre of town, **Restaurant Nouveauté** (mains US\$1-2) has a basic menu of *brochettes* and beans.

The road linking Kibuye to Kigali is excellent and passes the 100m-high **Chutes de Ndaba** (Ndaba Waterfall) after about 20km. Okapi Car run several buses to Kigali (RFr1400, two hours). Local minibuses (RFr1200) are more

crowded. There is usually also one bus a day to both Cyangugu and Gisenyi.

RWANDA DIRECTORY

ACCOMMODATION

Camping options are pretty limited in Rwanda, but dorm accommodation at mission hostels is cheap at US\$1 to US\$3 per night. The catch is that doors close at 10pm or earlier.

Cheaper hotels are generally on the grungy side in Rwanda, but there is usually a good selection of midrange hotels available in most towns. International standard hotels are available in Kigali and Gisenyi, while Parc National des Volcans offers several atmospheric lodges.

ACTIVITIES

It's all about the gorillas here in Rwanda, and the tracking at Parc National des Volcans ranks up there with any activity on earth – don't forget US\$375 cash, however. Other monkey business includes primate tracking at Parc National Nyungwe Forest. For a change of scenery, there are water sports at Gisenyi or Kibuye.

BUSINESS HOURS

Government offices and businesses are generally open between 8.30am and 4.30pm or 5.30pm, with a short break for lunch sometime between noon and 2pm. Most shops and banks do not break for lunch, but some banks close early at 3.30pm.

Local restaurant hours are 7am to 9pm, and international-type restaurants are open 11.30am to 2.30pm and 5.30pm to 10.30pm.

DANGERS & ANNOYANCES

It is always worth checking on current security conditions before entering Rwanda. At the time of research, the country was very safe, but there is always the outside chance of problems spilling over from the DRC or Burundi. Urban Rwanda is now one of the safer places to be in Africa, but in Kigali, like any capital, take care at night.

Out in the countryside, do not walk along anything other than a well-used track; there might still be landmines around. The potential risk is highest anywhere near the borders with the DRC and Burundi.

PRACTICALITIES

- Rwanda uses the metric system and distances are in kilometres.
- Electricity in Rwanda is 240V, 50 cycles, and plugs are mainly two-pin.
- The English-language *New Times* is published several times a week, plus the *New Vision* and *Monitor* are available from Uganda. French magazines and international titles are available in Kigali.
- Radio Rwanda, a government-controlled station, broadcasts in Kinyarwanda, French, Swahili and English.
- Television Rwandaise (TVR) is the state-owned broadcaster.

There are a number of roadblocks along all main roads to ensure security, but foreigners are never hassled.

EMBASSIES & CONSULATES

Rwandan Embassies & Consulates

Rwanda has diplomatic representation in the following countries, among others:

Belgium (☎ 02-771 2127; 1 Ave de Fleurs, Brussels)

Burundi (☎ 226865; Ave du RD Congo, Bujumbura)

Canada (☎ 613-722 5835; 121 Sherwood Dr, Ottawa, ON K1Y 3V1)

France (☎ 01 42 27 36 31; 12 Rue Jadin, 75017 Paris)

Germany (☎ 030-2091 6590; Jägerstrasse 67 10117 Berlin)

South Africa (☎ 012-460 0709; 35 Marais St, Pretoria)

Tanzania (☎ 211 5889; 32 Ali Hassan Mwinyi Rd, Upanga; ☎ 8am-3.30pm Mon-Fri)

Uganda (☎ 041-344045; 2 Nakayima Rd, Kampala)

UK (☎ 020-7224 9832; 120-122 Seymour Pl, London)

USA (☎ 202-232 2882; 1724 New Hampshire Ave, Washington DC)

Embassies & Consulates in Rwanda

Countries with diplomatic representation in Kigali (Map p723) include the following:

Belgium (☎ 575551; Rue de Nyarugenge)

Burundi (☎ 517529; Kacyiru)

Canada (☎ 571762; Rue de l'Akagera)

France (☎ 575206; Ave Paul VI)

Kenya (☎ 583332; Blvd de l'Umuganda)

Tanzania (☎ 505400; Ave de la Paix)

Uganda (☎ 572117; Ave de la Paix)

UK (☎ 585280; Blvd de l'Umuganda, Kacyiru)

USA (☎ 505601; Blvd de la Revolution)

HOLIDAYS

As well as religious holidays listed in the Africa Directory (p1106) the principal public holidays in Rwanda are as follows:

New Year's Day 1 January

Democracy Day 8 January

Genocide Memorial Day 7 April

Labour Day 1 May

National Day 1 July

Peace & National Unity Day 5 July

Harvest Festival Day 1 August

Culture Day 8 September

Kamarampaka Day 25 September (anniversary of the referendum in 1961)

Liberation Day 1 October

Armed Forces Day 26 October

INTERNET ACCESS

Email and internet access in Rwanda has improved fast and is now widely available in Kigali, as well as on a more limited basis in Butare, Cyangugu, Kibuye and Ruhengeri, all at around RFr500 per hour.

MAPS

At the time of research the best map of Rwanda was *Rwanda Burundi: International Travel Map* published by ITMB Publishing at a scale of 1:400,000.

MONEY

Rwanda's unit of currency is the Rwandan franc (RFr), which is sometimes also abbreviated to 'Frw'. It's best to come to Rwanda with US dollars or euros in cash. The only useful bank branch in the country is Banque de Kigali in the capital, which offers cash advances on credit card and can change travellers cheques, neither of which is possible in the provinces. There are ATMs in Kigali, but they are not yet wired to an international network. Credit cards can be used in some upmarket hotels and restaurants in Kigali.

Bureaux de change – which are mostly in Kigali – offer slightly better exchange rates than banks. Moneychangers hang around central Kigali and usually give a slightly better rate, but count your money carefully. All banks, and most bureaux de change, are closed on Saturday afternoon and Sunday.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Be extremely careful wherever taking photos in Rwanda, as the authorities are very sensitive. Always ask before you take a pho-

tograph of anybody or anything other than landscapes.

POST

Postal services from Rwanda are reasonably reliable. The main post office in Kigali has a poste restante and an attached internet café.

TELEPHONE

Telephone calls can be made at the post offices (abbreviated to PTT) or any of the private MTN or Rwandatel card phones or booths found in major towns.

There are no area codes in Rwanda. Mobile telephone numbers start with the prefixes 085, 086 and 083. Visit www.rwandaphonebook.com when looking for telephone numbers in Rwanda.

VISAS

Visas are required by everyone except nationals of Canada, Germany, Hong Kong, Kenya, South Africa, Sweden, the UK and the USA.

From a Rwandan embassy or consulate, tourist visas are valid for three months, cost US\$60 and can be extended in Kigali. Two photos are required, and visas can usually be collected within 24 hours.

Two-week extendible tourist visas are available at the Kigali airport and at the major land borders with Burundi, the DRC, Tanzania and Uganda, for US\$60.

Visa Extensions

Visas can be extended at the **Ministère de l'Intérieur** (☎ 585856) in Kigali, in the Kacyiru district, about 7km northeast of the city centre. It takes about one week and costs US\$30 per month.

Visas for Onward Travel

Visas for Burundi, the DRC, Tanzania and Uganda are available from embassies in Kigali (see opposite for contact details).

Burundi Visas cost US\$40 for one month single entry, although check on the security situation very carefully before visiting. Also available on the border.

Democratic Republic of Congo For land crossings to eastern DR Congo eight-day visas are available at Bukavu or Goma for US\$35.

Kenya Visas cost US\$50 or the equivalent in local currency, require two photographs and are issued the same day if you apply before 11.30am. However, visas are also available on arrival.

Tanzania Visas require two photos and generally take 24 hours to issue. The cost depends on nationality.

Uganda Visas cost US\$30, require two photos and are issued in 24 hours. However, it is far easier to get them at the border on arrival.

TRANSPORT IN RWANDA

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

Gregoire Kayibanda International Airport is located at Kanombe, 10km east of Kigali centre. Airlines connect Kigali with Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), Bujumbura (Burundi), Entebbe (Uganda), Nairobi (Kenya), Johannesburg (South Africa) and Brussels (Belgium).

The following airlines have offices in Kigali (Map p723):

Air Burundi (☎ 572113; Ave des Milles Collines)

Ethiopian Airlines (☎ 575045; www.flyethiopian.com)

Kenya Airways (☎ 577972; www.kenya-airways.com; Ave des Milles Collines)

Rwandair Express (☎ 503687; www.rwandair.com)

SN Brussels Airline (☎ 575290; www.brusselsairlines.com; Ave de la République)

South African Airways (☎ 577777; www.flysaa.com; Blvd de la Revolution)

Land BURUNDI

Make sure you check the latest security situation carefully before crossing by land into Burundi. The main crossing point between Rwanda and Burundi is via Butare (Rwanda) and Kayanza (Burundi), on the very well-maintained Kigali–Bujumbura road. The border post is called Kayanza Haut. Yahoo Car, New Yahoo Coach and Gaso Bus run daily buses between Kigali and Bujumbura (RFR4000/5000 for a small/big bus, about six hours), departing about 7am.

There is also a direct road from Cyangugu to Bujumbura, but this is not in such good shape.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Do as much homework as possible before crossing by land into the DRC, as the security situation remains potentially volatile after almost a decade of civil war. There are two main crossings between Rwanda and the DRC, both on the shores of Lake Kivu. Cross-

DEPARTURE TAX

International departure tax is US\$20, but is included in the ticket price at the time of purchase.

ing between Gisenyi (Rwanda) and Goma (DRC) was considered safe at the time of research, although only for day trips to Goma, climbing Nyiragongo volcano or visiting the mountain gorillas. Longer trips into the DRC or overland trips through the country were inadvisable at the time of research. The southern border between Cyangugu (Rwanda) and Bukavu (DRC) is also open, but the security situation around Bukavu is a little more volatile than it is around Goma.

TANZANIA

From Kigali, take a minibus to the border town of Rusumo (RFR1500, three hours). Once across the border, jump on any form of public transport – often a pick-up – to Ngara. From Ngara, catch a bus (US\$10, 12 hours) to Mwanza. The road to Mwanza is mostly good but has some rough sections. Hitching is sometimes possible along this way, as plenty of aid vehicles use the road.

UGANDA

The main border crossing is located between Kigali and Kabale, via Gatuna (Rwanda) and Katuna (Uganda). Those travelling direct between Kigali and Kampala can travel with **Jaguar Executive Coaches** (☎ 086 14838), which has a VIP bus (RFR7000) and a standard service (RFR5000), both departing at 5.45am, 6.15am and 9am from Kigali's Nyabugogo Bus Station and taking nine hours.

Between Kigali and Kabale there are lots of minibuses, but a change of vehicle at the border is involved. There are regular minibuses from Kigali to Gatuna (RFR1500, 1½ hours). Across the border in Katuna there are minibuses (US\$0.50) and special hire taxis (US\$8 for the car) to Kabale.

There is also a second crossing between Ruhengeri (Rwanda) and Kisoro (Uganda), via Cyanika. The road is in excellent shape on the Rwandan side however, it's in poor condition on the Ugandan side. Frequent minibuses link either side of the border with Ruhengeri (RFR500, 25km) and Kisoro (US\$0.60, 12km).

GETTING AROUND

Air

Rwandair Express (Map p723; ☎ 503687; www.rwandair.com) offers four flights a week from Kigali to Cyangugu.

Boat

There used to be ferries on Lake Kivu that connected the Rwandan ports of Cyangugu, Kibuye and Gisenyi, but these services were suspended at the time of research. Speedboat charters are currently the only option between these ports, but they are very expensive.

Bus

Rwanda has a good road system, and plenty of modern, well-maintained minibuses serve all the main routes from dawn 'til dusk. Minibuses leave when officially full – which means when all the seats are occupied, unlike neighbouring countries where many more are squeezed in.

The best minibuses are privately run, scheduled services operated by Okapi Car, Trans

Express 2000, Atraco Express and Virunga Ponctuel. Destinations covered include Butare, Gisenyi, Kibuye and Ruhengeri, and departures are guaranteed to leave – hourly in many cases. They are less crowded and drive more carefully than the usual minibuses, but cost a little more.

Car & Motorcycle

Cars are suitable for most of the country's main roads, but those planning to explore Akagera or follow the shores of Lake Kivu might be better off with a 4WD.

Car hire isn't well established in Rwanda, but most travel agents and tour operators in Kigali can organise something from RFr25,000 per day for a small car and up.

Local Transport

Taxis are necessary only in Kigali, but it is possible to find the occasional taxi in most other major towns. In Kigali and other larger towns, you can use a *taxi-motor* – a motorcycle that doubles as a two-wheeled taxi.